

This past week, Fort Davis was honored to be added to the list of America's 2008 Dozen Distinctive Destinations by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This was the only Texas location to receive the honor this year. Through great effort and a true devotion, the residents of Fort Davis have worked hard to preserve its historic, cultural, and scenic uniqueness. In so preserving its character and by protecting its serene landscape, visitors from all over can enjoy and learn about the history of Fort Davis in a truly realistic and dynamic environment that is sure to make an indelible impression.

One of the treasures of the town of Fort Davis is the Fort Davis National Historic Site and today that site is in jeopardy. Fort Davis National Historic Site was built by the U.S. Army to encourage settlement of West Texas, and to protect travelers along the San Antonio-to-El Paso Road. The majority of the soldiers stationed there from 1854 to 1891 were African Americans, many of whom were formerly enslaved men, and who served their country ably. Today, the fort is regarded as the best preserved in the American Southwest. Visitors to Fort Davis can see the landscape much as it was when these Buffalo Soldiers stood here, guarding the so-called western frontier in the 1800s, with the park's expansive views as much a part of the experience of visitors as the educational materials inside the fort itself.

While much of the park's views are protected by adjacent federal and state land, unfortunately, a prominent bluff over the fort is private land- and it is now on the market. If this bluff were sold to a private developer, it would destroy the integrity of the historic scene of the fort.

Simply put, Fort Davis would never be the same, and a portion of Texas' historic frontier heritage would be lost. As a proud Texan and an individual who enjoys visiting historic and scenic locales in West Texas, I am personally committed to doing all I can to make this happen.

It is our obligation as Texans, and as Americans, to take care of our national parks-or this and future generations will miss the opportunity to learn from and be inspired by our heritage and inspiring landscapes.

Congressman *Ciro D. Rodriguez* represents the 23rd Congressional District of Texas, including the Fort Davis National Historic Site.

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